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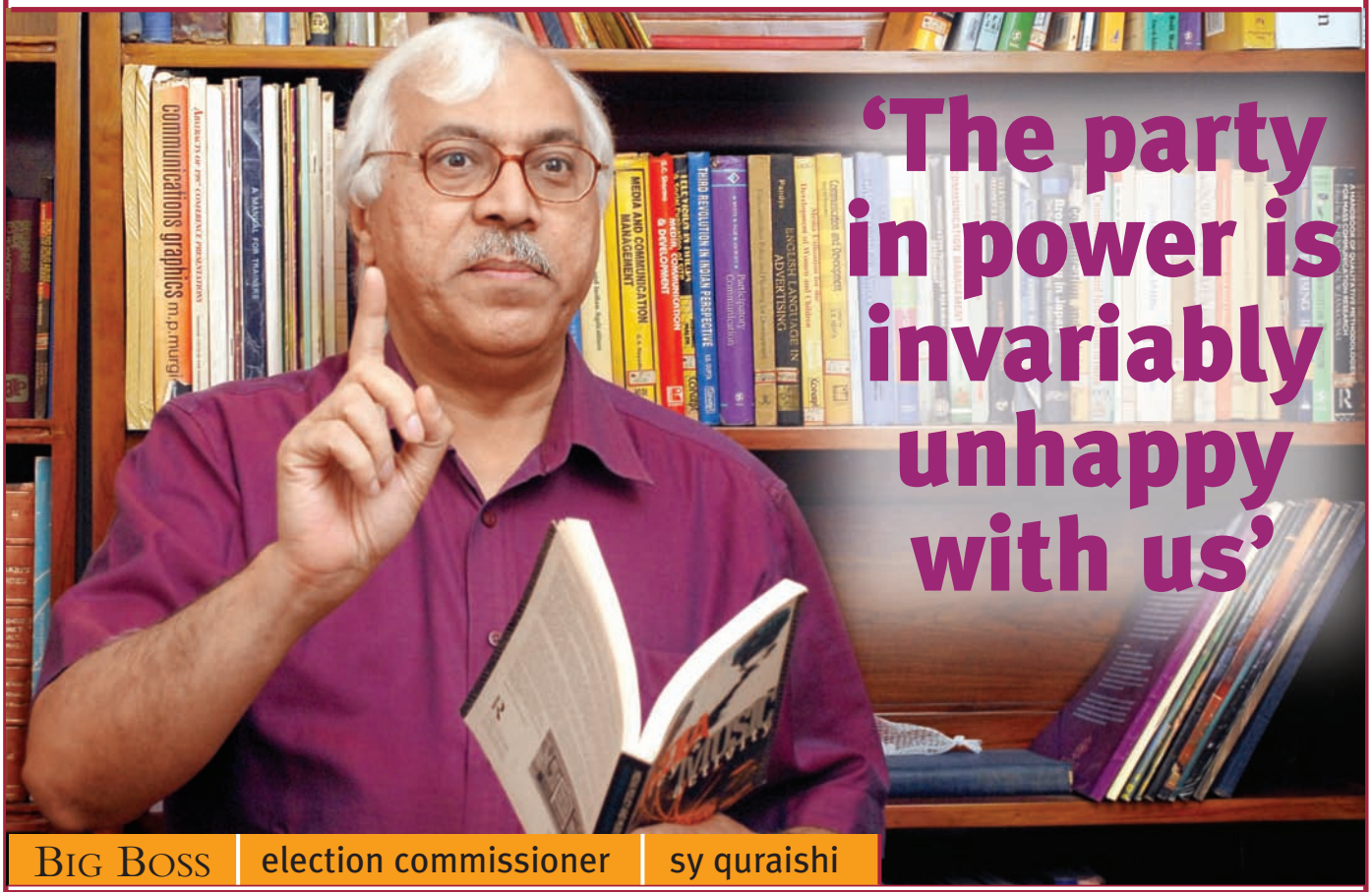
gfiles

INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT



'The party in power is invariably unhappy with us'

BIG BOSS | election commissioner | sy quraishi

interviewed by RASHME SEHGAL

Election Commissioner SY Quraishi has never been afraid of challenges. An IAS officer of the Haryana cadre (1971 batch), he realized when he was appointed Doordarshan Director General that the national broadcaster was making far too few programmes inhouse. During his brief innings of 15 months, he was able to ensure that over 30 per cent of DD programmes were produced inhouse. He also gave DD News a new identity by introducing a gamut of fresh young faces, the majority of which, he points out regretfully, has since been poached by private networks.

Quraishi, who has a doctorate from Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi on "The Role of Communication and Social Marketing in Development of Women and Children", was also Director General of NACO. There too he caused some heartburn by challenging the HIV/AIDS statistics on India that were being bandied around by foreign donor agencies as being grossly inflated. The world community was forced to revise the figures and today India has three million HIV/AIDS-affected people instead of the exaggerated five million.

An alumnus of St Stephen's College, Quraishi has a number of publications to his credit, including the two-volumed Haryana Rediscovered - Bibliographical Area Study. He is also a linguist, having studied Persian, German and Arabic.

gfiles: *With the growing politicization of our institutions, will the Election Commission continue to remain an independent entity? Former Election Commissioner TN Seshan used to say that once he retired, the EC would revert to being a political football to be kicked around by successive governments….*

SY Quraishi: The Election Commission has only gone from strength to strength. It is one institution that has established its credibility beyond all doubt. People approach us with all kinds of complaints and demands. Before taking a decision, we get inputs from all possible sources like the bureaucracy, NGOs,

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civil society and, of course, the media. The media remains our biggest ally because it keeps us in the loop about what is happening on the ground. Once we come to know that there is some malfunctioning taking place somewhere, we even send our own video teams to provide us with a first-hand appraisal of the details. Take the forthcoming elections in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat. In the case of the former, the Chief Minister has asked for a postponement while in the latter state there has been some criticism about our decision to transfer police officials. All this is part of the democratic process.

gfiles: *It seems as though the political party in power invariably emerges as the biggest critic of the Election Commission….*

SYQ: That is true. Our experience is that while the party in power is almost invariably unhappy with us, the opposition parties love us. But once the opposition party becomes the ruling party, the roles get reversed. Our aim is to provide a level playing field and this tends to annoy the party in power. The fact of the matter is that ruling parties have access to government funds and other facilities which they like to use but we do not permit.

Take the case of Mulayam Singh Yadav when he was Chief Minister of UP. After the state elections, he went around issuing statements that he had not lost to Mayawati but to the Election Commission. The state of Uttar Pradesh has just witnessed three byelections. Though his party won one bypoll, the other two were won by Mayawati's party. This time, he expressed complete satisfaction with the way the Election Commission had conducted the polls.

Every state, whether Bihar, UP or Uttarakhand, has felt the heat at different times. Both the ruling and the opposition parties realize, especially when they are no longer in power, just how much they stand to benefit from our interventions. We address every single grievance that we receive and we ensure that the polls are conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

gfiles: *Isn't it difficult to address every grievance that comes your way?*

SYQ: There is an increasing need to micro-manage the elections. This is because public expectation has grown enormously. For instance, they expect an observer to be stationed everywhere. But then it is because of this increasing micro-management that, during the UP elections, there were only four reports of repolling and that too because the presiding officers pressed the wrong button on the EVM (Electronic Voting Machine). All these were cases of human error. Within half-an-hour of this development, we had the EVM replaced. The system has become efficient. During the earlier election, the same state of UP was witness to over 100 murders during the election period.

gfiles: *The Election Commission now has a huge machinery working under it?*

SYQ: Yes, we have a huge infrastructure of 70 lakh government officials working under us during a general election. We have seven lakh voting booths and one million EVMs on which the votes are

'The ruling and the opposition parties realize, especially when out of power, just how much they stand to gain from our interventions'

Continued on page 4

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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EVER since the advent of gfiles some seven months ago each issue has carried something very special to write home about – an exclusive interview with the RTI Commissioner, the CAG's plans for overhauling the accounting system, the first-ever interview with the boss of the Sixth Pay Commission....Our November issue is another milestone. Not only because it carries the first detailed account of UP's police recruitment scam – arguably the biggest administrative scandal since India became independent – but also because of the simultaneous launch of our website: www.gfilesindia.com.

Yes, gfiles is spreading its wings. Readers who chance upon our magazine through the pass-along route or see reprinted articles, have been clamouring for us to make a web appearance. So far we have maintained an exclusively controlled circulation – complimentary copies to a huge body of civil servants, allied services, police, thought leaders, decision-makers, MPs across the country. Others must buy. Happily, an increasing number of readers has begun to take on paid subscriptions which are helping to maintain the production values, independence and financial health of gfiles. Our website, however, is not free. Readers will have to pay to download.

And they will not be disappointed. They will find themselves connected with and participating in an exclusive universe of opinions, analyses, prescriptions, interviews, stories and profiles focussing on good governance. gfiles's vision and editorial leitmotif is that without good governance democracies, the rule of law, individual freedoms, economic progress, social justice – and indeed the Constitution – collapse. gfiles is the mirror in which our public servants see themselves and their government.

This month's mirror reflects a ghastly image of governance at its nadir. Some of the revelations made by Editor Anil Tyagi in his special report on UP's police recruitment scandal are a cause for the nation to hang its head in shame. It shows the willful and carefully orchestrated destruction of the merit system and professional values by a state government hell-bent on replacing it with a politically-oriented patronage cadre.

In the pages of gfiles this is precisely the issue that has been addressed by Cabinet Secretaries, Chief Secretaries, former police chiefs, and retired bureaucrats. It is a countrywide disease in which the once-proud independent civil services are being made to dance to the tune of their political masters and vested interests. It is an atempt to hijack an entire nation. But all is not lost. Whistleblowers have emerged. Public servants are themselves exposing wrongdoings and defying politicians when asked to perform illegal acts. Institutions like SEBI have shown the courage to reform. And there are now repeated cries for systemic, fundamental changes to protect whistleblowers and insulate the public services from political harassment.

This month's cover story on Election Commissioner SY Quereshi illustrates this point. In the Election Commission we have today an effective, independent, and non-political government institution not because the politicians wanted it so but because the people of the country – fed up with rigging and booth capturing that made the electoral process a prisoner of politicians in power – demanded fair elections.

INDERJIT BADHWAR
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS: Justice BN Srikrishna's replies are replete with unnecessary stuff on how to teach government servants a lesson without a word on the financial packages that the Sixth Pay Commission is going to recommend. His recommendations will never be accepted as it is the bureaucracy which will give the final treatment to his report.

Dattatrey Das
Nashik Municipal Corporation, Nashik

I was delighted to see through *gfiles* (Big Boss) that there is someone who has taken note of a large number of unproductive government employees. It is a common sight to see them playing cards in and around all the Bhawans housing different Ministries. They should not be given any pay hike. The proposal to link pay hikes to performance is a move in the right direction. And only Justice BN Srikrishna, living up to his reputation, has the courage to make such a proposal.

Pankaj Pradhan, Delhi

Jyotiraditya Scindia (*gfiles*, September) rightly points out the presence of inter- and intra-state inequalities of growth in the country and that farmers cannot have harvestable crop for want of power, irrigation, seeds and fertilizer.

But his suggestion to privatize infrastructure of ports, roads and highways will widen the inequality of growth. The worst sufferers will be farmers.

Prof. Sudhir U Meshram,
Nagpur University

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

cast. It is the biggest democratic operation in the world. For every polling station, there are five people inside the booth and another five outside for security and other duties. Of course, our role ends with the elections.

gfiles: *What is the procedure that is followed if you want to transfer a bureaucrat that you find unsuitable?*

SYQ: The procedure is quite simple. If we feel someone is unsuitable, we ask the state government to supply us a roster of alternative names. We then check the *bona fides* of the proposed names and select the most suitable officers.

gfiles: *You exercise an enormous amount of power during an election. The CRPF, the BSF, magistrates and SDMs are all under your control. How do you ensure that this power is not misused?*

SYQ: The framers of the Constitution foresaw these problems and laid the ground rules in such a manner that the Commission could withstand government pressure. They also put in place sufficient checks and balances to ensure there was no misuse of power. The biggest in-built check is that there are three of us [Election Commissioners] and each has an equal vote and all decisions are taken by a majority vote. I would say that 99.9 per cent of the time, our decisions tend to be unanimous. That has been my experience during the 15 months that I have been here. The Commission has been constituted in such a manner that no one can take an arbitrary decision. If any one member were to try and attempt such a thing, the other two are present to correct the situation.

'The bureaucracy is often linked to the government in power. We follow all complaints very carefully. If we receive a complaint (against a bureaucrat) from a political party or civil society, we investigate it immediately'

gfiles: *But how do you all ensure that the bureaucracy does not overtake you while you are in the process of taking a decision?*

SYQ: The bureaucracy is often linked to the government in power. We follow all complaints very carefully. If we receive a complaint (against a bureaucrat) from a political party or civil society, we investigate it immediately. We also monitor all media reports; if we feel something is not right, we go ahead and take action.

gfiles: *Which would you describe as being exceptionally difficult states to monitor?*

SYQ: Every state has its own problem. Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states face the problem of militancy. UP and Bihar faced a great deal of rigging and booth capturing which we have helped to end. Other states have faced communal and caste tensions.

gfiles: *Do you feel former Commissioners like TN Seshan, MS Gill and JM Lyngdoh have helped to strengthen the institution?*

SYQ: Yes, they have helped to strengthen the EC but one cannot overlook the key role that our founding fathers played when they drafted the Constitution.

gfiles: *Are you happy with the functioning of the EVMs? There was some initial scepticism over their introduction….*

SYQ: Their performance is entirely above board. If something has gone wrong in the past, it is generally linked to human error. It took the EC 20 years to get them accepted by all parties. Now they are in demand even in local body elections and student elections.

gfiles: *Is the disqualification of candidates controversy behind the EC?*

SYQ: As opined in the Constitution, when the EC has to decide on disqualification of a candidate, we sit like a court before which top lawyers come and argue the matter. Our status is that of a Supreme Court judge. After the hearings are completed, we give our opinion. This legal verdict is then sent to the President as an "opinion". Of course, with Parliament having passed a Bill on this issue, the situation has now altered. g

Copycat growth is the evil

India and China are focused on the very same kind of economic pattern that has led to the present environmental crisis

FOR a predominantly agricultural country like India, in which 650 million of our 1.05-billion population earn meagre livelihoods, the effects of global warming will be catastrophic. Approximately 400 million farmers eke out a grim living on the 70 per cent of our cultivated land which is – intermittently – rain-fed. For these farmers, climate change will make such dry land agriculture even more risk-prone; it will cause floods, mid-season dry spells, land degradation and even more acute water scarcity.

Two world conferences on climate change took place in August-end 2007. The first was organized by the Climate Change Secretariat of the UN in Vienna, in which senior officials and scientists from 158 countries participated. The second was a gathering of the "15 Biggest Polluters" called by US President George Bush in Washington. The week-long UN conference concluded that the highly industrialized countries should "strive" to cut their GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions by 25-40 per cent of their 1990 levels by 2020. This "target" was described as a "loose guide" for the major International Climate Summit to be organized by the UN Secretary General in Bali, Indonesia in December. In its submission to the Vienna conference, the government of India said it would cost $2.7 trillion to reduce carbon emission by 10 per cent of current levels by 2036!

At the Washington meeting, the significant feature was Bush's departure from his administration's scepticism, side-tracking and denial of the very occurrence of global warming in making his first-ever categorical acknowledgement that climate change is a "real threat". But what corrective actions did he propose to deal with this threat? The US intends to launch a "Technology Fund" aided by world governments to develop nonGHG-emitting energy sources and industrial processes. The US will also "support" the UN on climate change, though there was no indication of how. And the US will work on "advanced technologies"!

Harnessing solar power in rural India

As long as they continue with their rapacious, unsustainable and environmentally disastrous lifestyle, there is little hope of stopping climate change

What Bush did not propose – which he could have easily done – was to commit the US federal government to do nationwide what the state of California had done as far back as two years ago. This includes mandatory GHG emission cuts for electric power plants, Japanese fuel efficiency standards for automobiles (US carmakers already meet those standards in cars they export to Japan), and a national as well as global R&D and mass manufacturing programe on all non-conventional/renewable energy sources.

In India, we have a major operational programme in these energy sources, producing 10,500 MW of grid power and with around 2 million solar photovoltaic (light-induced) energy systems in rural and semi-urban areas. They cover around 20 different applications, including lighting for homes, community centres and night schools, village and town street lights, solar lanterns and so on. It is all based on indigenously developed R&D and technology, and is exported to 30 developing countries.

Technology, though necessary, is far from sufficient in dealing with climate change. The core issue is the statement Bush made. Global warming and climate change have been caused by the massively resource-intensive lifestyle of the US, followed by the EU and, to a lesser extent, Japan. As long as they continue with their rapacious, unsustainable and environmentally disastrous lifestyle and its "demonstration effect" on the rest of the world remains strong, there is little hope of stopping, let alone reversing, climate change.

The central remedy lies not in developing and applying on a mass scale clean, energy-efficient technologies across the board, important as that is, but in fundamentally redefining the prevailing development patterns and lifestyles globally. This has to start with the highly industrialized countries and move almost concurrently to the ruling elites in China and India with their commitment to a type of economic growth which is a copycat version of that which the highly industrialized countries have adopted since 1950 and which has led to the looming catastrophe of mostly irreversible climate change. g

(The writer was science adviser to Indira Gandhi and secretary to the government in several scientific departments)

Saffron love for Suu Kyi
rss turnaround

AUNG San Suu Kyi, the pro-democracy leader of Myanmar (pronounced 'Myamma') or Brahmadesh – as the RSS calls it – was never a favourite of the saffron outfit, owing to her proximity to the Western world, British (read Christian) husband and support from market forces in Europe. Not long ago, an RSS activist in Myanmar was all praise for the Army there and how it dealt sternly with the rebels, especially those belonging to the Ronghiya Muslim minority.

Little wonder, then, that eyebrows were raised when Tin Way and other pro-democracy leaders in exile showed up at the residence of BJP leader M Venkaiah Naidu on October 12 and rubbed shoulders with RSS and BJP leaders. Also present was India's home-grown rebel leader of Emergency fame George Fernandes. Though not in the pink of health, Fernandes hogged the limelight with his I-told-you-so speech in support of Suu Kyi.

While most members of the gathering – invited by RSS veteran Ram Madhav – chomped on the South Indian snacks, the Myanmarese leaders gave speeches lamenting the lack of support from the UPA government. It was music to BJP ears till one of the speakers complained about the inaction of the previous NDA government as well.

The evening was a virtual coup by the pro-Advani group in the RSS and, though they rolled out the red carpet (or should one say "saffron") and explained away BJP president Rajnath Singh's absence to the foreign guests, the latter's followers are said to be annoyed. They are apparently planning an "intellectual summit" on Myanmar, whatever that means.

An officer and a gentleman
maya's kindly secy

THE governance of Uttar Pradesh, regardless of regime, is ruled by the mandarins on the fifth floor of the Secretariat. Mayawati's team is led by the amiable Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Shailesh Krishna. The previous regime had dumped him in a bureaucratic Siberia but he is now the most powerful officer and is slowly changing the widely-held notion that the Mayawati regime is out of bounds for party legislators. On October 19, three BSP MLAs had a session that presented a disarming picture of governance. The MLA from Bundelkhand said he had sought permission from the Collector for immersion of Durga idols in the clean pond of a nearby village as the one in his own village was polluted. The Collector said he would pump clean water into the filthy pond from a tubewell. The MLA opposed this on grounds of water scarcity. Krishna appreciated this and ordered the Collector to be cooperative. Next was the MLA from Bahraich district, with a complaint about 24-hour power cuts in the township within his constituency while the neighbouring township got 20 hours of supply – obviously due to an inflow of lucre into the pockets of the concerned officers. Again, Krishna called the concerned men and issued orders.

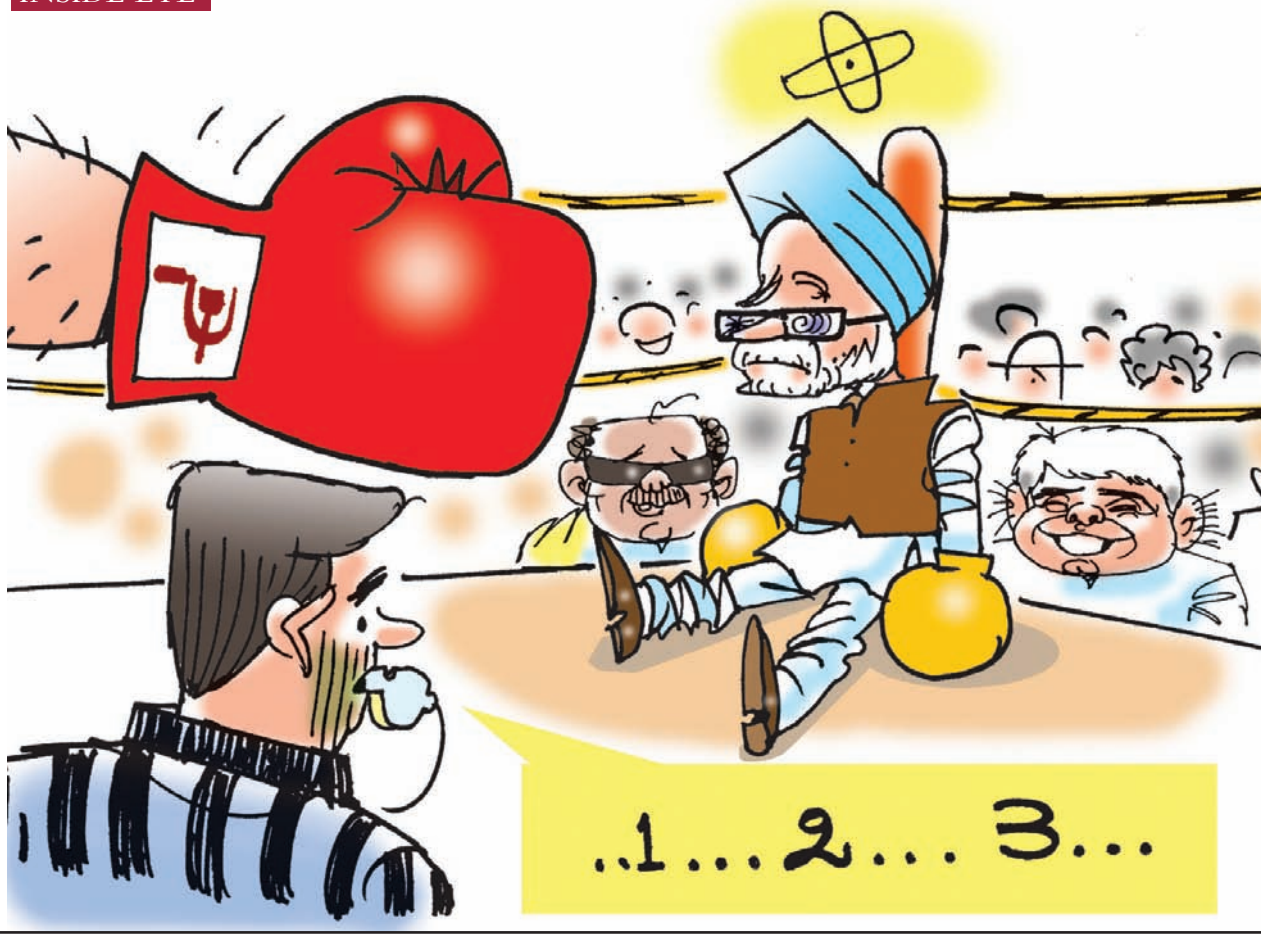
The third MLA wanted financial assistance from the government for a poor boy who had been run over by a speeding vehicle. Krishna immediately phoned a hospital and arranged free treatment.

Rampart around Rahul
jealous clique

Rahul Gandhi may have failed miserably to increase the Congress tally in Uttar Pradesh in the last polls, but the experience was part of his learning curve. His recent induction into the party set-up as General Secretary is a clear indication of his future place in Indian politics. And, quite in keeping with his exalted position, the caucus surrounding him is now united in keeping at bay every potential Young Turk coming to meet the young man at 12 Tughlak Lane, his official residence-cum-office. The fear is that such visitors may be drawn into the inner circle, threatening the caucus' relationship with the Gandhi scion.

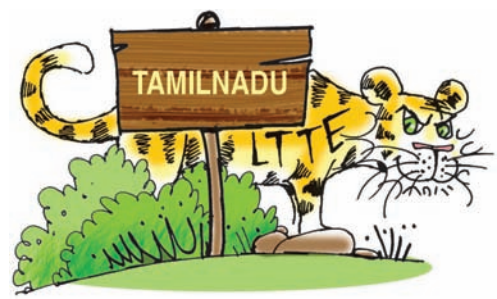
The caucus consists of a trinity: Kanishk Singh, son of Rajasthan Governor SK Singh, Sachin Rao, and Namik. Their *modus operandi* is deceptively simple. It comes into play when Rahul begins meeting party workers in his office. The caucus sifts through the visitors and accompanies the potential Young Turks when they approach Rahul. They then engage Rahul's attention in other matters, depriving the visitor of the chance to open up before him. He thus fails

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA



to gauge the worker and give him an assignment. Then the visitor's time is up and the next one is called in. And thus the game goes on.

Strange case of a TN portfolio settling scores



Tamil Nadu, it is obvious, has a penchant for Chief Ministers from the film industry. MG Ramachandran, J Jayalalithaa and present incumbent Kalaignar Muthuvel Karunanidhi were all former film stars and, between them, have ruled the state for decades. But, apart from the film industry background, there is something else in common. Their rival parties – the currently-in-power DMK and the AIADMK – have shown a marked distaste for including a Home Minister in their respective Councils of Ministers. Instead, the Chief Minister has always had additional charge of the Home portfolio. And the state, since inception, has never had a Home Minister.

Now, the reason for this is that each Chief Minister wants to have this instrument at his or her command to settle personal scores with the previous incumbent. Jayalalithaa did it with Karunanidhi and now is fearing that she will be at the receiving end of similar treatment. The Chief Secretary is reduced to implementing what the Chief Minister decrees. Meanwhile, the law and order situation is worsening progressively with each successive Assembly poll. Bootlegging, smuggling and political murders have become routine. And the LTTE has again started regrouping in the state, causing further law and order problems. g

Mussoorie to the rescue

India's IAS academy will help upgrade the skills of the island nation's top bureaucrats

IT is widely acknowledged that India's public services, particularly the executive grades, have maintained high standards. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) has always risen to the occasion whenever there has been a national crisis and when governments have changed. A country with over a billion people and with complex customs and traditions couldn't have asked for more. The IAS has earned a reputation for holding India together.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie can be proud of its alumni – members of the IAS and other all-India executive services – for their excellent performance. Over the last four-and-a-half decades, the LBSNAA has trained thousands of IAS and other officers to administrate India. The carefully crafted courses have provided knowledge, skills and attitudes to LBSNAA's alumni, making IAS officers some of the best administrators in the world.

India and Sri Lanka both inherited the colonial system of administration from the British. The Raj created the Indian Civil Service which later gave way to the Indian Administrative Service while Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, established the Ceylon Civil Service, which was replaced by the Ceylon Administrative Service and later succeeded by the Sri Lanka Administrative Service. The recruits to the CAS and the SLAS were groomed and moulded by the Academy of Administrative Studies in Colombo. In the 1970s, theAcademy of Administrstive Studies (AAS) was renamed Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) which at present provides the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to the entrants to most executive-level All-Island services, foremost of which is the SLAS.

Lack of project management and contract administration skills in the public sector have impeded Sri Lanka's growth

A visit to LBSNAA by President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka in November 2006 has culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian academy and SLIDA for collaboration on many fronts. The signing of the MoU took place in New Delhi recently when Rajapaksa visited India to deliver a keynote speech at the *Hindustan Times* Leadership Summit.

This collaboration between the two key institutes responsible for moulding and nurturing of the administrators in the two countries augurs well for Sri Lanka as well as India. In particular, the MoU will be able to provide an on-going and consistent opportunity for SLIDA to interact with the LBSNAA's faculty, which over the years has honed its training skills. Given India's network of academic establishments, such as the Indian Institutes of Management, universities and many learning networks, the LBSNAA has been able to draw upon a huge reservoir of skills to finetune its faculty competencies to train India's administrators. This is where SLIDA will gain from the MoU because in Sri Lanka, such a fine network of academic institutions, particularly pertaining to administrative studies, does not exist.

The task of SLIDA in coming years will be stupendous; it will have to produce administrators who are able to oversee and steer development in the post-conflict era. As Sri Lanka gets ready and moves towards a political solution to the crisis that has plagued the country for well over 25 years, the quality of administrators will be a critical factor for Sri Lanka's success. Whilst Sri Lanka has been able to ensure education for all and reached a high level of literacy and quality healthcare for its population throughout the country, in major infrastructure development it has not shown significant progress. Lack of project management and contract administration skills in the public sector and poor monitoring of progress have impeded Sri Lanka's growth to a large extent. These will be SLIDA's challenges in years to come and the liaison with LBSNAA will certainly help SLIDA to find the right direction.

Rajapaksa (left) with Indian Minister Suresh Pachauri: new deal

Faculty development through exchange, upgrading and revision of curricula, participation of trainees in selected courses, joint research and publication, and periodic interaction between the administrations of the two institutions are envisaged through the MoU and both Sri Lanka and India will not only benefit from each other's experiences but will also reach new levels in their bilateral relations. g

(The writer is Principal Secretary to the President of Sri Lanka and heads his nation's civil service)

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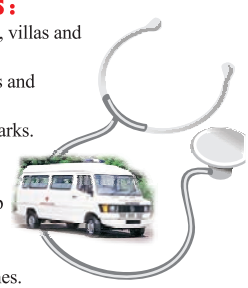

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Changing the THER

WHENEVER I ruminate on the subject of the search for energy security, I look back 900 years into history and marvel at India's practical wisdom. The country did not have any horses then – so India imported them from Iran. Today, we don't have enough gas and I might submit that as far back as 1989 I posited what appeared to many a preposterous suggestion: that we import gas from Iran. Under current realities, we are still unable to do so. Hopefully, we will be able to get some horses to help with our transport problems. But my belief is that we will avoid this drastic solution with some original thinking, astute planning, and innovative technology.

The *Oxford Dictionary* says: "Security is freedom or protection from danger or worry." In the energy sector, we need to define what constitutes danger and what causes worry. There must be a great deal, because you find a similarity in the words used by President Jimmy Carter and later by President George W Bush, quite an opposing political personality. Carter appeared on television when he was in the White House wearing a cardigan, lowering his thermostat and exhorting the US and the rest of the world to move towards energy independence by taking the fundamental step of curtailing wasteful consumption.

Energy security has several dimensions – economic, strategic, and military. About a century ago, Lord Selborne decided that coal would be the energy source for British naval ships. Enough oil was just not available to run the British Navy. Years later, a young Member of Parliament, Winston Churchill, decided to reverse that policy. He shifted the navy to oil, because he felt that ships could move much faster and the refueling time would be reduced substantially. And the results have been recorded in history. Naval superiority played a crucial role in helping the Allies win World War II. There is a lesson here. In issues of energy security, it is important not merely to secure supply but also to make certain interventions in consumption. In today's world liquid fuels are the main source of energy driving the transport sector.

No part of the world is insulated from the impact of what is happening globally in the energy market. There are repeated warnings from energy pundits that if China and India reach the same per capita ownership of cars as the US, the consequences could be unpredictable. I find that statement a bit inequitable. The developed countries have established a path of transportation and energy consumption, which the rest of the world wants to follow. So if we really want the rest of the world to change we have to invoke what Mahatma Gandhi said: "Be the change you want to see in the world".

If the global need is for a different transport infrastructure and system by which human beings, goods and freight move from one point to the other, then we need a totally different technology for which the developed world must set an example and create a new model. Most governments around the world have been neglecting what I believe should be given the highest priority. How do we bring about much greater efficiency in the consumption of energy and a shift to those sources of energy that might give us a higher level of security? This is where natural gas plays a role as an extremely important fuel. Perhaps in 30 or 40 years we would have a totally different set of energy sources that

In issues of energy security, it is important not merely to secure supply but also to make certain interventions in consumption

R MOSTAT

The challenge presents unprecedented opportunities for partnerships between government, industry, academe and civil society

would be exploited on a large scale. This will happen sooner rather than later. But, in the interim, natural gas is going to play an extremely important role. But there are imbalances. There are certain parts of the world where reserves are aplenty, but the supply of gas from those sources is still totally inadequate. There is an institutional problem here. The natural gas industry is not really looking at its role as it is emerging, and not seizing opportunities as they arrive.

Companies supplying natural gas need to get together and come up with a macro view of world solutions, particularly focussing on specific regions that have large quantities of yet untapped gas. It is entirely possible that if we can tap some unconventional sources of gas of which we have huge reserves – gas hydrates, biomass for gasification – it would then be entirely possible that gas would be able to supply a large part of the demand for energy for the human race. And technology would play a key role.

France took a decision to move to greater use of nuclear fuel, but alongside a large part of the transport sector was converted to use of electricity

This requires a paradigm shift in technologies, infrastructure and end usage by which gas could be used on a larger scale. The French, for example, made bold moves after the first oil price shock. Lacking in adequate indigenous energy sources, France took a conscious decision to move towards greater use of nuclear fuel, but at the same time a large part of the transport sector was also converted to use of electricity. So there was a matching of actions on the supply as well as demand side.

SHARAD SAXENA

Delhi Metro: modern transport workhorse

SO far as energy security is concerned, we've never faced a greater challenge than we do today. This challenge also presents unprecedented opportunities for collective action such as partnerships between government, industry, academe and civil society.

Energy consumption, usage, emissions are inextricably intertwined with climate change that has become one of the major environmental concerns the world over. The quest for energy security must go hand in hand with the quest for sustainable eco-friendly development. As Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), I am also deeply involved in this area. The fourth assessment report of this body, which involves hundreds of experts and scientists from all over the world, along with the worldwide growing awareness of the impact of climate change and the threats that it carries, will garner substantial political support for moving to lower emissions, lower carbon dioxide emissions, and newer sources of energy.

In this, gas can play an extremely important role. And, if we can move to bio-fuels and resources that would bring about reduced net emission of carbon dioxide, there would be a major benefit for the human race and all living beings on this planet. In the years ahead, we will see an increase in the awareness of the major threats that the human race faces. My hope is that a different energy regime will emerge over a period of time, which will be less polluting, more equitable, and will certainly ensure that future generations will not blame us for having ruined what we inherited from nature's bounty and benevolence. g

(The writer is Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, joint winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. This article is adapted from a closed-door interaction with government staffers)

Destroying the

A government inquiry uncovers a Rs 800-crore racket involving bribes, fake marks

by ANIL TYAGI

- *Raveena Singh (name changed) topped in MSc (Chemistry) and then reluctantly appeared in the Police Recruitment Examination of Uttar Pradesh on the insistence of her parents. She was first in the written test, securing 168 marks out of 180. But, in the 20-mark interview, she got only one mark. Her total came to 169. The cut-off mark for selection was 170 out of 200. She was not recruited.*
- *Kavita Tripathi (name changed), allegedly proximate to a powerful Minister in Mulayam Singh Yadav's Cabinet, was selected despite being a full inch shorter than the mandated 151 cm.*
- *Shabnam (name changed), an in-house candidate from the police wireless department, was forced to oblige top officials of the police recruitment board, a local goon and the above-mentioned Cabinet Minister. She was then tossed among a group of four men as a piece of meat. Terrified, she resisted and tried to flee. She was chased and overpowered, tonsured and burnt with cigarettes. When they finally let her go, she ran away to Dehra Dun and hid there for a month – fearing for her life.*
- *A candidate belonging to a particular caste obtained 108 marks in the written exam but was accorded a tally of 158 thanks to some crafty use of whitening fluid. She made it to 170 by getting 18 marks in the interview.*
- *A candidate who did not appear for any physical test as she was eight months pregnant was selected.*

THIS list constitutes only the proverbial tip of the iceberg in the scandal of police recruitment in Uttar Pradesh in 2005-06 during the Mulayam Singh Yadav regime. This government set up 55 Recruitment Boards to recruit 22,000 constables in the state. After Mayawati became Chief Minister, she instituted an inquiry headed by Additional Director General, Special Task Force Shailja Kant Mishra to probe the recruitment process. Of the 55 boards, 51 were investigated and nine given a clean chit. Four were left out as two were subjected to legal proceedings and the other two could not complete recruitment.

The findings of the Mishra Committee were submitted in three volumes and were disclosed, though heavily censored, by the government – leading to public outrage and shaming the entire government machinery and police department. Mayawati has suspended 25 IPS officers and cancelled the recruitment of 17,868 persons selected by 42 boards.

The report shows that Mulayam Singh Yadav used the government as his personal fiefdom to amass wealth and create his own caste army in the police system, but it also raises many questions about the body politic of the state and police recruitment. Indicating procedural flaws, it shows that the police administration in the state has collapsed vertically and horizontally. A handful of honourable police personnel who refused to obey the unlawful diktats of the political masters were dumped in insignificant posts and the boards shuffled umpteen times to accommodate yesmen. Rules were flouted with impunity – for instance, the government rules stipulate a one-to-one interview and not a group interview.

A senior police officer narrated how it was done in true Bollywood style: "The candidates were ordered to sit in a big hall in groups of 40 or 50. After some time, the interview boss made his entry, teacup in hand. Standing on the platform in front of the door, he smiled and cast his gaze over the crowd. Then he took a full round of the hall and exited.

Police: compromised guardians

ne LAW

Bribe rate card

Rs 800 crore was collected from recruits through a graded system of bribes:

- Upper castes paid Rs 4 lakh
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes paid Rs 3.5 lakh
- Backward classes paid Rs 3 lakh
- Minorities and girls paid Rs 2.5 lakh

s and sexual favours in selection of constables under the Mulayam regime

The interview was over."

The bribes were justified before the aspirants by telling them that, following their entry into the police force, their "dowry rate" would shoot up to Rs 6 lakh – which is actually true – and that they would have secured a passport to earning illegal money throughout their working lives. The candidates' parents were told that the increased dowry of Rs 6 lakh that their sons would become eligible for would bring them a profit of Rs 2.5-3.5 lakh immediately.

The recruitment system was then tampered with. The favoured candidates did not appear for the written exams themselves. The answer sheets of genuine candidates who were good were evaluated for the benefit of the favoured candidates. It was common for answers to get more than the maximum marks and for marks to be totted up twice. Cutting/overwriting/erasing were detected without any countersigning by the invigilator or the examiner.

The bribes were justified before the aspirants by saying that, following entry into the police force, their 'dowry rate' would shoot up to Rs 6 lakh and they would have secured a passport to earning illegal money throughout their working lives

An inquiry headed by Additional Director General, Special Task Force Shailja Kant Mishra probed the recruitment process

An obscure private company, M Cubetron, was given the contract for scanning Optical Mark Reader (OMR) sheets despite the technical service branch of the police department being technically competent to handle the job. This company did not have a back-up of the hard disk for it had deleted the entire data to hamper any investigation. The results of the main written exam were not signed by the company staff.

According to police officials, the recruitment board chiefs made around Rs 50-60 crore in toto. The investigating agency seized the hard disk of the computer belonging to the ADG, Wireless, and found pornography and music in the police recruitment folder. The broadband internet connection (with unlimited download) cost Rs 1,000. But the bill came to Rs 17,000 while the mobile bill was Rs 35,000.

Police sources told *gfiles* that the suspended recruitment board chairmen are all naming one political master. And a top police official who is part of the investigation fears for his life. He has taken the precaution of keeping the secret documents pertaining to the investigation at several places.

Now, the suspended recruits have nowhere to go and are bearing the stigma of having bribed police officials. Though Mayawati has said they will be allowed to try their luck in the next recruitment drive, most of them will be overaged by then. Besides, there is no guarantee that it would be fair. And what if Mulayam Singh Yadav returns to power and orders a review of recruitments during the Mayawati regime?

The solution lies not with an individual Chief Minister but in overhauling the police department. g

PRUDENCE above PAISA

The panel must keep in mind that its recommendations will apply equally to the Centre and to the poorest state

AS WE await the Sixth Pay Commission's report, it is encouraging to read the assertion by its Chairman in the October 2007 issue of *gfiles* that financial prudence will be a key factor governing its recommendations.

The report of the last Pay Commission, submitted when I was Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, was disastrous. In almost all the states, the Pay Commission's recommendations are adopted for state government servants, those serving in the local bodies, teachers and the public sector corporations. The financial burden becomes heavy for the state as neither the local bodies nor the public sector corporations have adequate resources but the same pay scales are implemented. Last time, taking into account all the states, the wages rose by a whopping 74 per cent from Rs 51,548 crore to Rs 89,813 crore!

Uttar Pradesh has over 10 lakh government servants and one lakh teachers. In the state, as well as in several others, the treasury went almost bankrupt following the adoption of the new pay scales. Salaries fell in arrears and were often delayed by two or three months. There was general unrest among the employees. It took two to three years for the situation to stabilize.

What compounded the problem was that the financial implications of the recommendations could not be worked out properly. They were not worked out correctly at the Centre or in the states. What was written between the lines was interpreted liberally. And the Centre refused to help the states as it was itself in dire straits financially.

The total number of public servants at the Centre and in the states numbers over a crore and 80 lakh. This includes the judiciary as well as university teachers and employees of local bodies. The Pay Commission must realize that its recommendations will not be confined to Central government servants but will include all public employees. It must work out not only the financial implications for the Centre but also for each state and see whether the Central and state governments can bear the burden. Alternatively, it must recommend devolution of funds from the Centre to the states to meet the burden.

It has often been stated that the pay of government servants must be commensurate with their productivity. Criticism of their output will continue until we find a standard to measure their productivity. A suggestion that could be thought of is the growth in GDP, which is now a well-defined calculable index. Can the growth in salaries be linked to the GDP? Perhaps the Pay Commission can look into this.

The previous Pay Commission felt the government is overstaffed and recommended reduction. However, this was an erroneous assumption and has led to reduced efficiency and supervision, and more corruption. We have only 1.8 crore public sector employees for a population of 102 crore – less than 2 per cent. In no country is the number of government employees less than 4-6 per cent of the population. The result in India is that the system is collapsing at the lower level. The criminal administration system is on the verge of breakdown. The number of constables is so low that they are supposed to be on duty 24 hours. There are no shifts in most police stations, especially rural ones. The number of judges is disproportionate to the number of cases filed. The Chief Justice of India has said that he requires 1,539 High Court judges and 89,479 subordinate judges to clear the backlog in one year.

There were 38.7 lakh Central government employees in 2001. After the recommendation of the last Pay Commission was implemented, the figure has come down to 31.64 lakh – a decrease of 18.37 per cent. With every budgetary allocation, new government schemes and fresh programmes for development are proposed. It is becoming increasingly difficult to carry out government policies.

I hope that the Sixth Pay Commission does not make that mistake. We do not need any additional strength in the Secretariats, but we do need more staff in the "merit" sector of education and health, and in the criminal administration system. g

(The writer was Secretary General, Rajya Sabha and Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh)

The Indian thana: bravely struggling

India has only 1.8 crore public sector employees for a population of 102 crore – less than 2 per cent. In no country is the number of government employees less than 4-6 per cent of the population

The babus, and the rest

What about the disparity between the officers and Classes II, III and IV of government staff?

THE views expressed in the interview of Justice BN Srikrishna, Chairman, Sixth Pay Commission (*gfiles*, October 2007), are arbitrary, dictatorial and irrational. Central government employees' wages are less than what is admissible and are not comparable to Public Sector Undertakings and the private sector. It is sad that the media always terms government employees babus without realizing that there are other staff too.

We have almost five lakh employees in railways, ordnance factories, telecom and the postal department with two different sets of workers – one in South and North Blocks, and the other in the departments of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the revenue and income tax departments. In 1991, government employees totalled 43 lakh. It has now plummeted to 28 lakh.

In the public and private sectors, the starting salary is Rs 15,000-16,000, whereas in the Central government it is Rs 5,000-6,000. Is it not justified to demand parity? Shape up or ship out, warns Justice Srikrishna without any sound basis. It is an arbitrary statement in the absence of any job evaluation by the Commission.

We have submitted a detailed memorandum to the Sixth Pay Commission demanding standardization of salaries and parity as recommended by the International Labor Organization.

The Sixth Pay Commission has constituted two task forces – one for job security and the other for pensions. Section 311 of the Constitution gives constitutional guarantee to a government employee whereby he can be removed only after a proper inquiry is constituted as per government procedures. Saying "shape up or ship out" means the Commission is targetting the job security of government employees. Performance-based incentivization is neither feasible nor acceptable. Our focus is to ensure that the basic pay for the unskilled is based on and determined by international standards.

At present, we get the first promotion after 12 years of service and the second after 24 years. We are now demanding automatic promotion and enhancement of salary every eight years. It is ridiculous to talk about performance-based promotion of Class II and Class III employees when Class I officers and Supreme Court judges are promoted on seniority basis. Why this double standard? Someone becomes an officer after clearing a single exam in his lifetime, and then enjoys promotion on time scale basis till retirement. But Class II, III and IV employees are asked to appear for exams. We are not ready to accept this discriminatory yardstick.

Around the globe, government employee-population ratio is 4-6 per cent but in India it is less than 2 per cent. The government must realize the difference between a service-providing nation and a nation in the shape of a company which always thinks of profit only. You cannot outsource every work of the government to the private sector.

There will be a largescale decisive agitation to safeguard the rights and interests of government employees

A person takes up a government job primarily for three considerations: wages, job security and pension. The Sixth Pay Commission seems to have decided to wipe out these three fundamentals. We have reliable information that it is planning to include all those who contribute in the pension fund in the new pension scheme. We have demanded that pension should be treated on the basis of the old scheme. None of the previous Pay Commissions' recommendations have been implemented without staff protesting by going on strike and this one's recommendations, which will be no different from the earlier ones, will face stiff opposition. There will be a largescale decisive agitation to safeguard the rights and interests of government employees. Those sitting in an office and making a wasteful list of recommendations will not succeed. We will fight for our rights. g

(The writer is Secretary, All India Trade Union Congress)

An AITUC rally: c'mon, stand up for your rights

Propagating a greed culture

The Sixth Pay Commission must strive for a professional ambience in which civil servants can give of their best

by MG DEVASAHAYAM

THE Sixth Pay Commission has taken up the onerous tasks of focusing on good governance and sprucing up the bureaucracy to provide cutting-edge administration. It has adopted the maritime mantra of 'shape up or ship out' to send a clear message.

The Fifth Pay Commission had attempted something similar without any success. While its recommendations on downsizing and linking compensation to productivity were dumped, an increase in salary beyond the recommendation was implemented, putting an additional burden of Rs 17,000 crore per year on the Central government's finances. The state governments followed suit.

The result was that, while government finances have been badly ravaged, there has been neither downsizing nor improved productivity. On the contrary, the bureaucracy has fattened by capturing and subsuming a myriad of commissions and regulatory bodies!

The new Pay Commission is under severe pressure to further profligacy. This could increase inflation and stifle economic growth. Also, once the impact on states and other quasi-government bodies is factored in, it could cost 1.5 per cent of GDP, something India can ill afford.

To bring about good governance and administration, and contain profligacy, two types of issues need to be attended to. One is systemic, which the Administrative Reforms Commission should address. The other is behavioural, which the Pay Commission can deal with. This concerns the myths and mindset influencing civil servants.

Bureaucratic gagging is passed off as a philosophy – "a civil servant should be seen, not heard". This archaic perception, decreed by our erstwhile colonial masters who only wanted a "lackey service", is wasting some of India's best minds in the IAS by making them mere *status quo* time-servers. Worse, by remaining silent and being unable to speak up against corruption and misrule, the honest and conscientious among them are fast losing principles and personality. This is certainly not conducive to good governance.

Then there is rampant political partisanship. IAS officials align with the ruling party. This is based on the wrong assumption that ruling politicians represent all the people and their interests and what they say should be the final word in matters of policy and governance. The founding fathers' rationale for the creation of an elite All-India Service viewed IAS officials as having a constitutional role to play in giving honest, fair and just governance to the people, irrespective of party affiliation.

Too much "protection" can reduce a person to cowardice. This is what is happening to IAS officials – they willingly become cowards since they do not have the courage even to face a transfer or some minor inconvenience for upholding the principles of good governance. Like the proverbial coward who dies a thousand deaths, they compromise and acquiesce repeatedly.

The practice of being a jack of all trades and master of none is the villain of professionalism and performance in governance. Nowhere in the civilized world can one find experienced and competent technocrats and professionals being compelled to take orders from greenhorns with negligible knowledge of the subject, just because they belong to a particular pampered service. Besides perpetrating non-professionalism and non-performance in governance, this feudal practice enables politicians to play favourites and gives them unbridled power in postings – the main criteria being pliability.

Not all India's elite civil servants are greedy. What they crave is a professional and dignified ambience wherein they can give their best without being harassed, constrained and choked by political skullduggery, archaic rules and procedures. This is what the Sixth Pay Commission should aim to achieve. g

ILLUSTRATION: ARUNA

The Pay Commission is under pressure to further profligacy. This could increase inflation and stifle economic growth

What's so secret, anyway?

Like the CIA, our intelligence agencies must be accountable to the legislature

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has received a good deal of flak lately over raids conducted as part of an investigation. A retired middle-level officer of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) published a book critical of the intelligence agency's functioning. The CBI, after receiving a complaint from the government, registered a case against him under the Official Secrets Act and conducted raids at his residence and the publisher's premises. Now, conducting raids is standard procedure in investigations – to recover any possible incriminating material or evidence. But the CBI has become the fall guy.

As long as the Official Secrets Act, 1923 remains in the statute books, whenever a complaint is received some agency has to take action. The existence of this law is a different issue, especially in view of the Right To Information Act. It is true that information and its availability is the *sine qua non* of a democracy. But governments, irrespective of party, have tended to pay lip service to transparency. India's intelligence set-up, including the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and RAW, are not subjected to any scrutiny except by departmental bosses – which amounts to no scrutiny.

Intelligence agencies all over the world are obsessed with secrecy. Their retired officials are discouraged from writing memoirs or speaking to the media.

The RAW officer's book has been in the market for five months and has sold over 3000 copies. As a middle-level officer, he may not have complete knowledge about the agency as all intelligence agencies function on the "need to know" basis. He talks about lack of leadership and accountability in RAW, misuse of funds, and cases of doubtful procurement.

The trouble with such books is that they contain few facts but lots of innuendos and gossip. He talks about RAW's decision to release the transcript between Pervez Musharraf and Mohammed Aziz at the height of the Kargil war. He calls it wrong from the intelligence point of view. Releasing the transcript might have served a diplomatic purpose but Pakistan discovered the Islamabad-Beijing satellite link that was being tapped and that source was lost forever. But such decisions are taken at government and political level, not agency level. This highlights his lack of knowledge of the workings of government.

Instead of invoking the Official Secrets Act, honest criticism must be accepted and made good use of in the interest of the nation. The RTI Act overrides the OSA

However, the book should goad the government into having a mechanism whereby the sacred cows of our intelligence agencies become subject to some kind of accountability. The CIA is accountable to the US legislature's intelligence oversight committees. Moreover, it cannot hold on to its secret files forever: CIA files are declassified after 40 years.

But it is not so in our country. This deprives the public, and also the media, of an opportunity to comment on the intelligence agencies' past performance, blunders and achievements. According to a report, there are more RAW operatives posted in Western countries than in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, Afghanistan, Myanmar or Thailand. The report also says that in Afghanistan, it does not have even one Dari-speaking operative. It is time that, instead of invoking the Official Secrets Act, honest criticism is accepted and made good use of in the overall interest of the nation. The RTI Act clearly affirms that it overrides the OSA. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission also wants the OSA scrapped. The country's vital secrets must be guarded. At the same time, the citizen's right to information about the functioning of the government and its departments must not be diluted. People working for secret organizations have certain obligations. Their output is for the use of the government. This is unlike the case of the CBI, where the output goes to the courts – which is in the public domain. Some jobs involve an unwritten obligation and commitment that the secrets of the country must go with the man to his grave. g

RAW headquarters: the height of top secret

SHARAD SAXENA

(The writer is former director of the CBI. He can be reached at jogindersinghfdips@rediffmail.com)

The unheralded policeman

The force soldiers on despite an archaic Act, poor living and working conditions, and political meddling

IN 1948, when the first batch of the Indian Police Service graduated, the nation welcomed it. It was a laudable idea to have a national police service with constitutional sanction.

I can proudly proclaim that one of the main reasons India has remained unified is efficient and vigilant policing. Proper policing requires the right training, an environment conducive to work, and answerability to the law. This can be achieved only if the country's political masters truly desire a competent, responsible and energetic police force that can function without fear or favour. For the last 40 years, the rulers have interfered with the police's functioning, including even transfers and postings of sub-inspectors for personal gain. And the disastrous results are plain to see – poor functioning of the police. We cannot have a better force unless the political masters make the police responsible and answerable to the law and not to them. Once this happens, a large number of politicians may even be behind bars but there will be a phenomenal change in policing.

Sadly, we are still governed today by the Police Act of 1861. The police force was established by the British rulers for two reasons – to prevent and detect crime, and to maintain law and order. The British were basically interested in revenue and fair administration. As these two objectives were realized smoothly, they did not bother to make any structural change in the police force. Undoubtedly, the police's character then was coercive and nobody could raise any voice against it. The British deliberately recruited local youth into the lower rank and file. But the colonial past lingers 60 years after Independence. The same Act and third-degree torture remain the hallmarks of the police in free India today.

In all these years, what we have missed out on is public faith in the police. This needs to be restored. We find tremendous growth in communications, IT, road infrastructure, space technology, and so on while the Indian police force lags far behind. Emerging challenges like social changes, growth in population and urban migration require the police to modernize to keep pace with them. It is a truism to say that, given the constraints, the Indian police is a competent force and has done a great job. It's an integral part of our society and needs a word of appreciation for the good work. The sacrifices of police personnel go unnoticed by the public. Every year, we lose about 1,300 policemen in fighting terrorists and criminals. Even the military does not lose so many personnel in war. When the nation celebrates Independence Day, Republic Day, or Diwali and other festivals, the policeman is on duty far from his village, his family, his near and dear ones. We restore kidnapped children to their parents, risking our lives. We recover stolen goods and nab anti-national elements. Yes, it is our duty to perform these tasks but society should at least not denigrate us. We are one of you.

On Independence Day, Republic Day, or Diwali, the policeman is on duty far from his village, his family, his near and dear ones

The police force would have been more people friendly and efficient, and borne a more human face if it had not been for the failure of its own leadership as well. Our jawans still live in subhuman conditions without basic sanitation, potable water, lights and fans. In remote areas, conditions are worse. These factors take a toll of performance.

As for corruption, it pervades every department and the police cannot be an exception. Though, that does not absolve us. In earlier days, the integrity of an IPS officer was rarely questioned. The deterioration started because the system failed to punish corrupt police officers and create a better working environment. Not many officers have been punished for involvement in corrupt practices.

I would say a society gets the police it deserves. If you want the police to serve society with efficiency and impartiality, improve recruitment, resources and make them accountable only to the law. g

(The author is a former DGP, Tripura)

One small step

WHEN I was appointed Director General of Police, Tripura, I observed that the state police patrolled only the roads whereas terrorists ruled the interiors. I discussed this with the Chief Minister and suggested that the police venture into the rural areas to curb terrorism. The Chief Minister said that nobody in the police force listened to him despite repeated instructions. I returned and quietly decided to take the initiative on my own.

We established a few camps in the interiors, and a few days later I got up at 5 am, packed my luggage (*pitthoo*) and marched into the interiors of the state. I reached a remote place that was a terrorist hideout and established a police post there. The rest is history. With little effort, 400 terrorists surrendered and the situation improved considerably. I am not trying to boast that I did a big job. What I want to emphasize is how a simple act on the part of a dedicated policeman can change the face of society.

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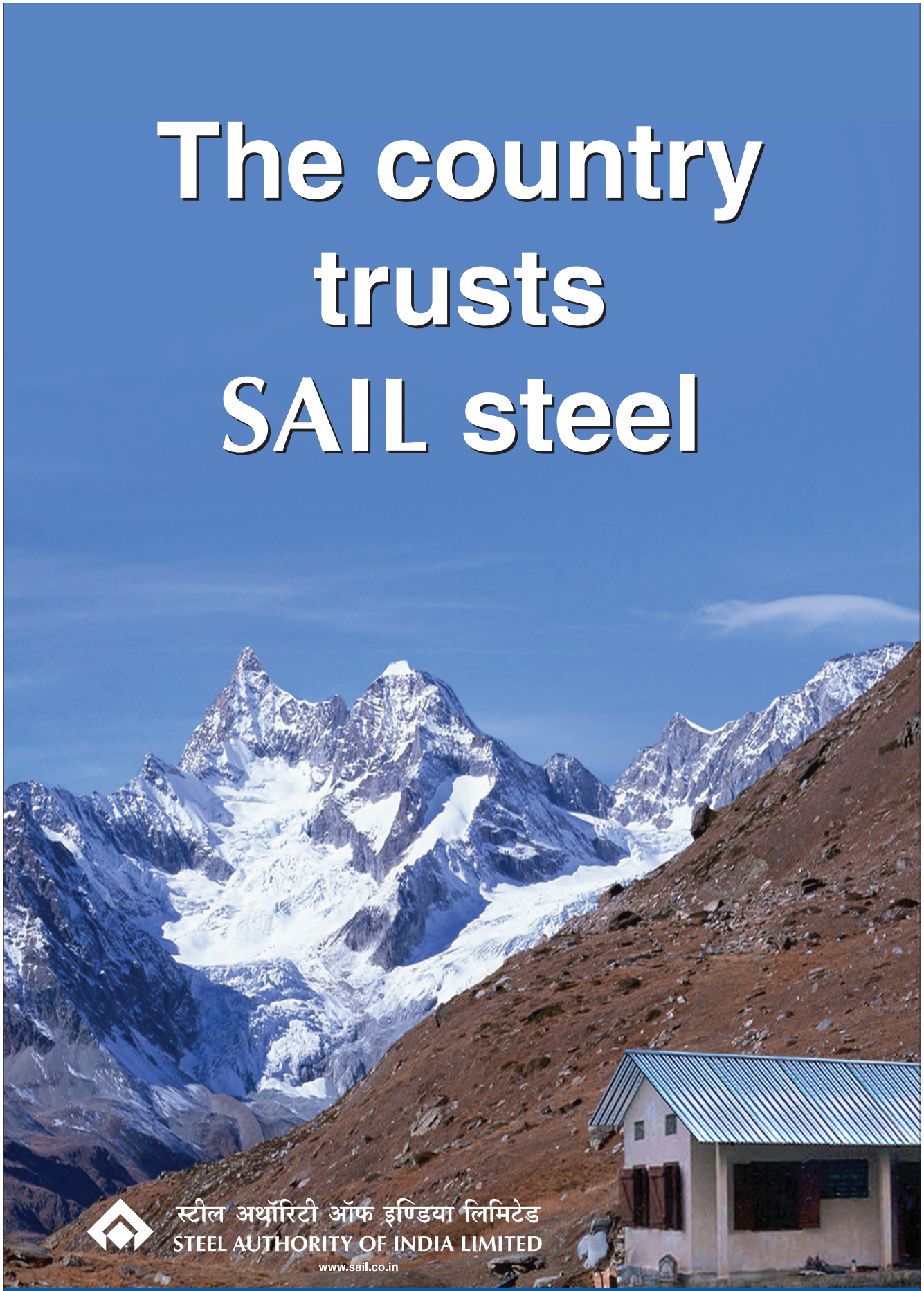

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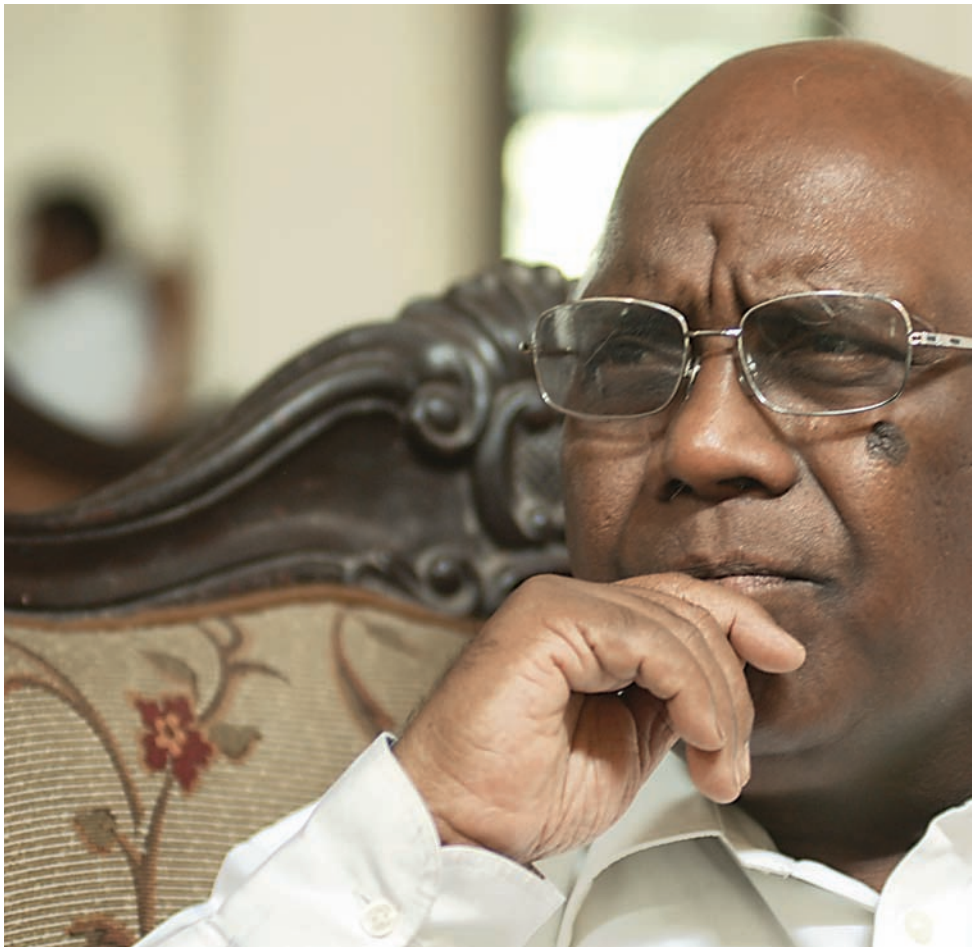

DARING to DISOBEY

The former Tamil Nadu Industries Secretary recalls how he once refused to carry out orders to arrest party leaders

I WAS born in a middle-class farmer family in Salem district of Tamil Nadu. I was very good in studies but burned the midnight oil to reach my goals. After schooling, I secured admission into Loyola College, Madras which is considered on a par with St Stephen's College, Delhi. I got a master's in economics. Loyola was known for producing IAS officers – it had a 20 per cent share in the total number of successful candidates from Madras. I watched my friends and collegemates being selected but it never occurred to me to try myself. But then, since I lived in the hostel, the academic and competitive spirit got to me. I was successful in the first attempt, with economics and political science as my options. I was the 1964 batch and was allotted the Tamil Nadu cadre as the state had 10 vacancies. My first posting was as sub-collector, Sivakasi – a place known for manufacturing fireworks and printing.

'Politicians can cut your throat without letting you feel the slightest pain while they keep rejoicing in your pain'

State politics was undergoing a sea change in the 1960s. Chief Minister K Kamaraj was replaced by M Bhakthavatsalam in March 1967. This Congress regime can be reasonably termed fantastic for Tamil Nadu. The DMK started gaining ground slowly by highlighting three issues: imposition of Hindi on the state by the Centre, neglect of Tamil Nadu villages, and the Centre's apathy towards the downtrodden. Interestingly, these issues have become irrelevant for the party now.

The Dravidian parties have ruled for 40 years. The DMK and AIADMK – seemingly diametrically opposed – have actually complemented each other's agenda. These past four decades are marked by politician-bureaucrat interface. With CN Annadurai as Chief Minister, the DMK performed excellently initially. He provided good leadership and better governance. Annadurai adored the norms of administration and instructed his Cabinet colleagues and party legislatures not to interfere with the functioning of civil servants. Sadly, this lasted hardly a year. Muthuvel Karunanidhi took over and is currently in his fifth term as CM. His second and third terms were a shambles. Corruption and communalism peaked. He interfered in day-to-day administration. But his fourth term was idyllic. In spite of providing good governance, he lost the next election and J Jayalalithaa came to power. In his fifth stint, I see him isolated and cornered by all forces.

Selvaraj: pensive warrior

I recall vividly an incident when President's Rule was imposed after dismissal of the Karunanidhi government. Mohan Lal Sukharia was Governor. All the Collectors were told to arrest DMK leaders, including its MPs and MLAs. I was posted in Udakamandalam (popularly known as Ooty) and refused to carry out the orders. It was a painful decision to go against the unjust orders.

I visualize this service as totally devoted to improving the life of the people. Every segment of society faces some problem, so the administration should consider welfare in totality. A bureaucrat should essentially be a visionary – thinking day in, day out how to provide innovative input to the political leadership.

My professional trajectory is in no way different from any other civil servant's. I became the youngest Director in the Industry and Commerce Department, Tamil Nadu, where I encouraged smallscale industries. When I took charge of Madras Port Trust as Chairman, I found it in a poor state. I resolved to make it a vibrant and profitable entity. This required imagination and relentless effort. I created a Container Terminal which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Chief Minister MG Ramachandran. During my stint (1975-78) as Secretary, Industries, I conceptualized a new industrial map for the state and ensured its implementation.

The bureaucracy that hankers for independence from political bosses must perform when given freedom. Yet, the bureaucracy must be guided by the political bosses in decision-making. The officers in the administration who take initiative should not become unwanted.

The officer who inspired me most was Chokalingam, who later became Chief Secretary. He was Collector during my first posting as sub-collector at Shivkashi. We clicked from the first meeting. The relationship kept growing and we are still good friends. He was a remarkable administrator.

In 1989, VS Tripathy, my friend and confidant of Mrs Gandhi, called to convey the news that the Congress wanted me to contest the Parliamentary elections. I had seven-and-a-half years' service left but I resigned. My friends and well-wishers opposed my decision. Former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, my IAS batch-mate, said I was choosing the wrong party. I did not realize what I was getting into. The Congress treated me badly but my friends helped me survive. My experience with politicians is that they can cut your throat without letting you feel the slightest pain while they keep rejoicing in your pain. In 1996, I contested the elections from Tenkasi Parliamentary constituency unsuccessfully. The Congress suffered losses throughout the state.

My contribution as an officer, in physical terms, is a modern port in Tamil Nadu. In addition, I provided a modern export processing unit that boosted modernization of the state. With regard to service, I have always helped the downtrodden.

Paradoxically, 603 collectors working under Chief Ministers throughout the country have the will to transform India but are not allowed to do so. There is a flaw in the system. In the judiciary, there is a unitary pattern. But in administration, there is no responsibility centred in it. Bureaucrats and politicians keep passing the buck to each other. And the common man suffers eternally for want of justice and equality. g

The uninterfering MGR

People are keen to know how MG Ramachandran performed. Well, he was basically not an administrator but trusted his officers and gave them a free hand. He cannot be blamed for any wrong decision. He left the administration to administrators. He was my Minister when I was Secretary, Industries. He summoned me only twice in three-and-a-half years.

'Paradoxically, 603 collectors throughout the country have the will to transform India but are not allowed to do so. There is a flaw in the system. In the judiciary, there is a unitary pattern. Not so in administration'

birthdays

IAS officers' birthdays | November 2007

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For the complete list, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

SHISHIR JHA
The 1987-batch IRS officer has been appointed official spokesperson of the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

KAVITA PANDEY
The 1990-batch IRS (IT) officer has become Director in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

AVNI VAISH
The 1975-batch IAS officer is now Managing Director, Tribal Cooperative Development Marketing Federation of India.

N GOKULRAM
The 1974-batch IAS officer of Karnataka has become Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India.

BK SRIVASTAVA
The 1971-batch IRS officer has taken over as Member of the Appellate Tribunal.

PANKAJ KUMAR
The 1987-batch IAS officer of Nagaland has become Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture.

SUDHIR GARG
The 1990-batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh has been appointed Private Secretary to the Union Minister of State for Steel.

SANJEEV SAHAI
The 1986-batch IAS officer of UT cadre is now in the Integrated Multi-Model Transit System Company in Delhi.

PRADIP SINGH
The 1974-batch IAS officer of UT cadre has been appointed Director General of the National Productivity Council.

RAKESH BEHARI
The 1977-batch IAS officer of UT cadre has become Chief Secretary, Government of Puducherry.

PP SHUKLA
The 1974-batch IFS officer has been appointed Indian Ambassador to Russia.

GANJI KAMALA VARDHANA RAO
The 1990-batch IAS officer is now Private Secretary to the Union Minister of State, Human Resource Development.

RK SRIVASTAVA
The 1984-batch IAS officer of Jharkhand has become Managing Director, National Consumers Cooperative Federation.

SUJIT PANDE
The 1994-batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh has been appointed SP, CBI in Mumbai.

DV SINGH
The 1976-batch IAS officer of Manipur-Tripura is now Additional Secretary, Personnel in the Government of India.

ASHOK DONGRE
The 1987-batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu has become Commissioner of Town and Country Planning in Tamil Nadu.

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Moving On: ias and ips officers retiring in November

ASSAM & MEGHALAYA
Mrinal K Baruah (1986)

GUJARAT
AJ Shukla (1983)

HIMACHAL PRADESH
Bharat Bhushan (1993)

JAMMU & KASHMIR
GD Wadhwa (1972)

MAHARASHTRA
C Sohoni (1971)
RK Bhargava (1972)

MANIPUR & TRIPURA
Ajeer Vidya (1977)

NAGALAND
Henilo Kent (1991)

RAJASTHAN
MS Khan (1988)

TAMIL NADU
S Rajarethinam (1979)
K Elangovan (1980)
V Thangavelu (1991)

SIKKIM
RS Shrestha (1977)

UTTARAKHAND
RS Tolia (1971)

UNION TERRITORY
MD Ghosh (1990)
RNarayanaswamy (1971)

UTTAR PRADESH
RK Bhatnagar (1990)
Narayan Pandey (1990)
Shyam Manohar Srivastava (1990)

WEST BENGAL
C Chatterjee (1971)

ips

UTTAR PRADESH
PP Srivastava (1988)

TAMIL NADU
A Kalimullah Khan (1988)

MADHYA PRADESH
Alind Jain (1974)

AGMUT
Amod K Kanth (1974)

JHARKHAND
Om Prakash Khare (1988)

KARNATAKA
HN Siddanna (1994)

WEST BENGAL
Mukul Sengupta (1980)

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Markets are in for churning

THE sub prime mortgage crisis and subsequent US Federal Reserve's 0.5 per cent cut in interest rates saw a mad rush of FII buying in Indian bourses which enabled the sensex to record its fastest- ever journey from 16,000 to 19,000 in just around a month's time. Such was the action that the domestic mutual funds got little time to react and most of them remained in selling mode.

However, the gains in the sensex have mainly been due to some large cap (high market capitalization) stocks which have been fancied by the FIIs in both cash and F&O segments. Most of the $6 billion (Rs 23,880 crore) inflows from FIIs between September 18 and October 16 have gone into such stocks, mainly comprising Reliance Energy, Reliance Natural Resources, Tata Power and so on.

The Nifty also crossed the 5,000 landmark, based mainly on the belief that the Indian markets are relatively safe amongst the emerging markets. The growth here is believed to be more sustainable with inflation well under control and advance tax data suggesting that the Q2 results are likely to be robust in general.

The general view that the valuations are already overstretched, and soaring oil prices as also the likely slowdown in corporate earnings did not deter those bent upon taking positions in Indian equities. Some analysts at this stage have been pointing out that the stage has been set for the bubble to burst anyday, awaiting a trigger.

And SEBI finally provided the trigger on October 16 when the market regulator released a report in the evening proposing certain curbs on participatory notes (PNs) with the main purpose of regulating and controlling huge and anonymous inflows of foreign money into the country's stock markets. On October 17, within a minute of the markets opening, the index touched the lower circuit, prompting the regulators to suspend trading for an hour. Since then, the sensex has shed over 1,500 points mainly due to heavy selling resorted to by FIIs who were net sellers to the tune of $1.63 billion (Rs 6,438.5 crore) in cash and future segments on October 17 and another $1 billion the following day. Domestic buying could not prop up the markets, for the estimated investment through the PN route is nearly Rs 3.53 lakh crore. However, there is a lot of money waiting to come, though now a good deal depends upon SEBI's willingness to allow it to enter.

One thing is for sure – in case the report gets accepted in toto, and there is no reason to believe it will not be, the markets are in for some churning. The only comfort appears to be the 18-month period allowed to phase out PNs. The investors may see excessive volatility in the markets as has been witnessed in the recent past. This is the time appropriate for portfolio churning and adjustments. What you buy becomes more important than when you buy. For the time being, a wait and watch policy is advised till the markets stabilize. However, small investors are advised to stay invested since fundamentals remain strong and money, like water flowing down, will certainly find its way into Indian markets no matter what.

However, an interesting thing in the recent past is that investors, especially small ones, have undergone a transformation of mindset. Earlier, whenever a correction happened, they would sell in panic and a herd mentality was evident. Now, they are holding and not panicking whenever they see the markets taking a plunge.

What you buy becomes more important than when you buy. For the time being, a wait and watch policy is advised till the markets stabilize. However, small investors are advised to stay invested

PBA Infrastructure (CMP Rs 82)

PBA INFRASTRUCTURE

INCORPORATED as Prakash Building Associates in 1974, the company's name was changed to PBA Infrastructure Limited in 2001. It is mainly engaged in construction of highways, dams, runways and heavy RCC structures. The company has shown consistent improvement in its financials on a Q on Q basis for the last quarters with the sales going past Rs 100 crore in the June quarter and operating profits at Rs 12.41 crore. The net profits showed a quantum jump to Rs 4.64 crore as compared to the preceding quarter. The company is likely to maintain its good show with an order book of about Rs 750-800 crore. The stock, available at a P/E of less than 8 based on EPS of trailing 12 months, is going dirt cheap when compared to the valuations that other infrastructure stocks command today. Investors can accumulate the stock to get amazing returns.

Mangalam Timber (CMP Rs 26)

Mangalam Timber Products Ltd
ISO 9001 : 2000 & 14001 Company

The BK Birla Group company has recently turned around and been brought out of the BIFR ambit. The firm's USP has been extensive captive plantation spread over thousands of acres in Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh which gives it the cost advantage over other players. The company makes Medium Density Fibre Boards – both plain and pre-laminated – of interior and exterior grades used for furniture, partition panels, cupboard shutters, false ceilings, cavity flooring, school desks, blackboards, diesel engine cab interior panelling, speaker boxes, packing boxes, shoe heels, photo lamination bases, engineering drawing boards, wall clock cabinets, handicrafts and so on. The company also produces formaldehyde and has come out with excellent Q2 results – a net profit of Rs 2.36 crore and EPS of Rs 1.29 as against Q1 profits of Rs 0.46 crore and EPS of Re 0.25. Invest with a time span of one to two years to get decent returns. g

The author has limited exposure to the stocks recommended with a long-term perspective. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

What price Shaheed Bhagat Singh?

IT seems Prasar Bharati suddenly awoke from slumber and decided to join the nation in celebrating the birth centenary of Shaheed Bhagat Singh on September 28. Doordarshan had with it an in-house documentary on Singh produced by Raj Shekhar Vyas, which it decided to telecast. The file thus started moving from the commercial department up to the Director General, Doordarshan and Chief Executive Officer, Prasar Bharati.

In the exercise, considerations pertaining to revenue prevailed when it came to selecting the slot. September 28 was a Friday – a day on which finding a good evening slot on the National channel is difficult. So a babu noted on the file that a good slot should be located "on the eve of the occasion".

Next, the revenue projections received from the Marketing Division, Mumbai for that day from 10 pm onwards were scanned. At 10 pm – prime time – the projection for *Tu Tota Main Maina* was Rs 7.5 lakh. At 10.30 pm, *Aur Ek Kahani* was expected to yield Rs 3.5 lakh. At 11 pm, *DD Top Ten* was valued at Rs 1.5 lakh. The slot after this, in which the National Programme of Dance is telecast, was sans revenue.

Ultimately, the commemoration of Bhagat's martyrdom was valued at Rs 1.5 lakh. The final noting said: "Considering all factors (revenue loss as well as convenience of viewers), 11 pm appears to be a good option for telecast of the documentary. The programme could be repeated next morning."

Sonia to the aid of farmers

HOW not to plan for farmers is clearly on the agenda of the new breed of liberal economists – all educated in the US or England, and linked to either the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF). Naturally, there is little love lost between this breed and the members of the only instrument left with the

government to intervene in the interest of farmers, the Commission for Agriculture Cost Prices (CACP).

In July this year, the CACP recommended Rs 1,000 per quintal as the MSP for wheat – an increase of Rs 250 over the previous year's price. The Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, immediately dismissed the recommendations. However, when the CACP refused to budge, he reluctantly forwarded it to the group of ministers. The Secretary had no reply when told that the food security mission had a target of creating a buffer stock of eight million tonnes of wheat in the coming season and this could not be achieved unless the MSP was reasonably increased.

The group of ministers was also against any increase. Fortunately, the recommendations leaked to the media and pressure mounted from various farmers' organizations. In the face of likely mid-term polls owing to the nuclear deal controversy, the chairperson of the ruling UPA, Sonia Gandhi, intervened and the recommendations were accepted.

Meanwhile, a demand to scrap the CACP has already been made at various public fora by none other than Isher Judge Ahluwalia, a former IMF staffer and wife of the all-powerful Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Mani's querulous women officers

MANI Shankar Aiyar is known for his views on women's empowerment since his days as an IFS officer. Ask any Congress worker, and chances are he or she will come up with a story or two to illustrate Aiyar's commitment to this cause.

After becoming Minister for Panchayati Raj, he found the right platform to further the cause. Be it formation of various committees within the ministry or overseas tours, Aiyar has always personally intervened to ensure adequate but qualitative women's representation. Now, a tussle between two senior women IAS officers in the ministry has become a major problem.

The acrimony between Secretary Meenakshi Datta Ghosh and Joint Secretary Aditi Mehta has become a routine matter in the ministry. The moment the two came face to face, they

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

would quarrel. Datta Ghosh would scream at the junior officer for not greeting her and Mehta would deny the charge with a similar outburst. The corridor became a battle arena and the staff hapless spectators.

This scene was witnessed several times a day, so much so that the ministry's work suffered. Now, Mehta has gone on leave till November 30, the day Datta Ghosh retires.

Each expects Aiyar to take her side. However, the minister has a temporary reprieve as he has been advised rest after suffering chest pains recently. g

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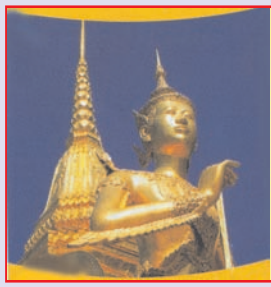

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